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FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO RUEHRL/AMEMBASSY BERLIN PRIORITY 6923
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY 0815
RUEHVI/AMEMBASSY VIENNA PRIORITY 6035

S E C R E T STATE 096555

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/08/2018

TAGS: PARM PREL MASS ETTC GM FR AU IR

SUBJECT: TTWG -- SNIPER RIFLES OFFERED TO IRAN'S MINISTRY OF DEFENSE

Classified By: EUR/PRA Director Anita Friedt Reasons 1.4 (c) and (d)

¶1. This is an Action Request - Please see paragraph 3.

¶2. (S) Summary: We have information that in mid-May 2008 the Iranian Ministry of Defense was offered 40 German-made Unique Alpine sniper rifles and associated equipment by the French company TAC International. We believe that the rifles were intended to be exported to Iran through Austria. End Summary.

OBJECTIVES/ACTION REQUEST:

¶3. (S/REL AU, GE, FR) Posts are requested to approach appropriate host government officials and deliver the talking points/nonpaper in para 4. In doing so, Posts should pursue the following objectives:

-- Alert officials that Iran's Ministry of Defense was offered German-made sniper rifles.

-- Urge host government officials you to reject any requests from your companies for the sale of lethal military equipment to Iran, and to prevent any such equipment reaching Iran or illicit forces in Iraq or Afghanistan.

¶4. Begin Talking Points/Nonpaper:

(S/REL AU, GE, FR)

-- We have information that in mid-May 2008 the Iranian Ministry of Defense was offered 40 German-made Unique Alpine sniper rifles and associated equipment by the French company TAC International. We believe that the rifles were intended to be exported to Iran through Austria.

-- Iran, a country designated by the United States as a State Sponsor of Terrorism, is actively involved in further destabilizing the Middle East region through its military build-up and support of terrorism.

-- Particularly in light of Iran's continuing refusal to meet IAEA and U.N. requirements with regard to its nuclear program, arms sales to Iran undermine our joint, diplomatic efforts to resolve the Iranian nuclear weapons issue.

-- In addition, given Iran's history of supplying military equipment and weapons to terrorist groups, we are concerned that these rifles could be diverted or provided to terrorist groups, including those in Iraq or Afghanistan.

-- In this particular case, the sniper rifles would jeopardize United States personnel who are already in a difficult security situation.

--We urge you to reject any requests from your companies for the sale of lethal military equipment to Iran, and to prevent any such equipment reaching Iran or illicit forces in Iraq or Afghanistan.

BACKGROUND

15. (S/NF) In 2005, the U.S. raised concerns with Austria regarding its sale of sniper rifles to Iran. Austria shipped 800 rifles to Iran, but canceled the rest of the contract. The Austrian firm, Steyr Mannlicher GMBH and Company KG, was sanctioned by the U.S. under the Iran Nonproliferation Act. We have subsequently recovered Iranian copies of this rifle in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Reporting Requirement and POC:

16. Please report delivery of the demarche and any immediate response within 5 days of delivery.

17. Department POC is ISN/CATTR Margaret T. Mitchell and EUR/PRA Matthew Hardiman. Please slug all replies to ISN and EUR. Posts' assistance is greatly appreciated.

RICE